

~~TOP SECRET - SENSITIVE~~

Summary Record of NSC Executive Committee Meeting No. 8
October 27, 1962, 4:00 PM

Secretary McNamara reported on today's daylight reconnaissance mission. One mission aborted for mechanical reasons, according to preliminary reports. One plane is overdue and several are said to have encountered ground fire.

Secretary McNamara again recommended night reconnaissance missions. The President delayed a decision on night flights pending a full report on today's daylight mission (the night mission was later called off).

There followed a discussion of a draft letter from the President to Khrushchev. The President added to the draft an offer to discuss with the Russians the proposals they had made public. He predicted that Khrushchev would say we had rejected his proposal. The formulation included a comment that Khrushchev must realize that matters relating to NATO must be discussed at a later time. The letter was approved in a revised form.

A message to U Thant was discussed and approved. The purpose of the message was to obtain the halting of work on the bases in Cuba as a condition to discussion of various other problems.

Secretary Rusk reported that one of our U-2 planes had overflown the Soviet Union by accident due to navigational error. Soviet fighters were scrambled from a base near Wrangel Island. The Secretary thought that the Russians would make a loud fuss about this incident.

The President decided not to make the incident public, but be prepared to do so as soon as the Soviets publicized it.

The President asked whether we wanted to continue to say that we would talk only about the missiles in Cuba. He believed that for the next few hours we should emphasize our position that if the Russians will halt missile activity in Cuba we would be prepared to discuss NATO problems with the Russians. He felt that we would not be in a position to offer any trade for several days. He did

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feel that if we could succeed in freezing the situation in Cuba and rendering the strategic missiles inoperable, then we would be in a position to negotiate with the Russians.

Mr. Bundy pointed out that there would be a serious reaction in NATO countries if we appeared to be trading withdrawal of missiles in Turkey for withdrawal of missiles from Cuba. The President responded that if we refuse to discuss such a trade and then take military action in Cuba, we would also be in a difficult position.

The President left the room to talk to General Norstad on the KY-9 secure telephone to Paris.

In the President's absence the message to U Thant was further discussed. The Attorney General felt we should say to U Thant: "While these and other proposals are being discussed, would you urgently ascertain whether the Soviet Union is prepared to cease work on the bases and render the missiles inoperable?" U Thant would be asked to convey the President's message to the Russians in New York most urgently.

Secretary Rusk questioned whether the Russians are trying at the last minute to obtain more of a quid pro quo from us or whether they are introducing new elements in the picture merely to weaken our public position worldwide.

Secretary McNamara pointed out, in connection with the current military situation, that a limited airstrike on Cuba was now impossible because our reconnaissance planes were being fired on. He felt that we must now look to the major airstrike to be followed by an invasion of Cuba. To do so he said we would need to call up the reserves now.

Secretary McNamara

[REDACTED] If we could do this he felt that the Soviets would not attack Turkey when we invaded Cuba. Our objective should be to seek to avoid any Soviet attack in Europe as a response to our invasion of Cuba.

Ambassador Thompson commented that it was impossible to draw any conclusions from the fact that one of our reconnaissance planes over Cuba had been shot at.

The President returned to the meeting, accompanied by General Lemnitzer.

The President approved the final revision of the statement to U Thant, which was to be phoned to U Thant and released here publicly. (Copy attached)

The President asked whether we should call together the representatives of NATO to report to them what we had done and were planning to do. If we reject Soviet efforts to tie in NATO problems to the Cuban situation, then we could persuade NATO to take the same position. An additional reason for a NATO meeting then is that if the Russians do attack the NATO countries we do not want them to say that they had not been consulted about the actions we were taking in Cuba.

Secretary McNamara said that current military planning//



The President expressed his concern that the alternatives we are facing have not been presented to NATO. NATO does not realize what may be coming and the Europeans do not realize that we may face a choice of invading Cuba or taking the missiles out of Turkey.

Secretary McNamara urged that a NATO meeting be held tomorrow only if we have decided to launch our strike tomorrow. He repeated his hope that we can act in such a way as to reduce the pressure on the Russians to hit Turkey,

Secretary Rusk recommended that mobilization measures be authorized immediately.

The President suggested that we talk immediately to the Turks, explaining to them what we were planning to do with our missiles and then explain the entire situation to the North Atlantic Council.


Secretary Rusk then read a Stevenson draft of a letter to Khrushchev.

The President said that the key to any letter to Khrushchev was the demand that work cease on the missile sites in Cuba. He predicted that if we make no mention of Turkey in our letter, Khrushchev will write back to us saying that if we include Turkey, then he would be prepared to settle the Cuban situation. The President said this would mean that we would lose twenty-four hours while they would continue to work on the bases and achieve an operational status for more of their missiles. He suggested that we would be willing to guarantee not to invade Cuba if the Soviet missiles were taken out.

Secretary Rusk returned to the Stevenson draft, which the President approved as revised. The Phrase "and assurance of peace in the Caribbean" was discussed and the reference to no invasion of Cuba was omitted. The President also agreed not to call a meeting of the North Atlantic Council.

The Attorney General commented that in his opinion the Stevenson draft letter was defensive. It sounded as if we had been thrown off balance by the Russians. The State Department draft merely said that we accepted Khrushchev's offer.

General Taylor summarized the conclusions of the Joint Chiefs. Unless the missiles are defused immediately, the Chiefs recommended implementation on Monday.



Secretary McNamara asked what we should do about air surveillance tomorrow. He stated his recommendation, i. e. if our reconnaissance planes are fired on, we will attack the attackers. General Taylor noted that in order to be ready to invade on Monday, we must continue intensive air surveillance.

The President directed that our air reconnaissance missions be flown tomorrow without fighter escort. If our planes are fired on, we must be prepared for a general response or an attack on the SAM site which fired on our planes. We will decide tomorrow how we return fire after we know if they continue their attacks on our planes and after we hear from U Thant the Russian reply to our offer.

The President considered a draft message to the Turks about their missiles. His objective was to persuade the Turks to suggest to us that we withdraw our missiles. He noted that negotiations with the Turks were very difficult if there was any life left in the proposal which we had asked U Thant to make to the Russians.

General Taylor read a late report of the shooting down of the U-2 reconnaissance plane in Cuba which said that the wreckage of the U-2 was on the ground and that the pilot had been killed. He felt that we should make an air attack tomorrow on the SAM site responsible for shooting down the U-2 plane.

Secretary McNamara said that we must now be ready to attack Cuba. [REDACTED] Invasion had become almost inevitable. If we leave U.S. missiles in Turkey, the Soviets might attack Turkey. If the Soviets do attack the Turks, we must respond in the NATO area. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] However, we should make every effort to reduce the chance of a Soviet attack on Turkey.

In an informal discussion following the formal end of the meeting, the Vice President asked why we were not prepared to trade the withdrawal of U.S. missiles from Turkey for the withdrawal of the Soviet missiles from Cuba, if we were prepared to give up the use of U.S. missiles in Turkey. Under Secretary Ball responded that last week we thought it might be acceptable to trade the withdrawal of the missiles in Turkey if such action would save Berlin. He felt that we could accept the Soviet offer and replace the missiles in Turkey by assigning Polaris submarines to the area.

Bromley Smith